

## WE WORK IN SILENCE

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Public health is the cheapest, yet one of the most broad-scoped health insurance programs in existence. And every citizen of the community is on our plan! From the wealthiest taxpayer to the struggling welfare recipient, we care about your health and look out for your well-being.

*We touch all lives...but mostly in silence.*

So, we're coming out of hiding. We want you to know the benefits you're receiving for a mere "premium" of about \$15.64 per person in Franklin, \$14.73/person in Isle of Wight, \$17.13/person in Southampton, and \$9.98 in Suffolk. We want you to know how we *prevent disease, promote healthy behaviors and protect you from environmental risks.*

You have witnessed dramatic, and successful, efforts to prevent disease with the Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus transmitted by mosquito bites. But, what you don't see are the extensive investigations and preventive interventions for all communicable diseases – the salmonella, the hepatitis, the AIDS, the tuberculosis. The sleuths in the night...*we work in silence.*

And how many times have you contemplated the incredible lives saved through **immunizations**? In five short years the HIB vaccine (Hemophilus Influenza Type B) reduced HIB meningitis from 20,000 a year to just over 1,400 a year--a disease where 5 out of 100 patients die and of the survivors 30% may be neurologically impaired. In Western Tidewater, 90.5% of our case-managed 2-year-olds are up-to-date on their HIB immunizations.

We provide support and education to high risk pregnant women, teens, and children through three home-visiting programs; Positive Life Choices/Baby Care, Resource Mothers, and Healthy Families. From improving birth outcomes and family stability to school readiness, staff in these programs strives daily to guide families through challenging circumstances to positive and successful futures. But no fanfare, please...*we work in silence.*

Many of our citizens are in need of services as they age. Nursing Home Screenings are required for individuals seeking nursing home placement. Public Health Nurses are an important part of these screening teams. One alternative to nursing home placement is Personal Based Care. This program allows the elderly and disabled to remain safely at home. It is intended to help people with activities of daily living. We provide community health care to rural areas where no other agency is willing or able to go. Franklin and Southampton County have a Medication Assistance program for people who need assistance getting their medications due to financial difficulties. Since, 2002 this program has served 1086 patients and has requested 16,001 medications which represents a dollar amount of \$4,697,282.70...*we work in silence.*

**Promoting healthy behaviors** is the driving force behind our campaigns for infant and child car seat usage -- for providing books and teaching reading in the home -- for intensive, individual counseling of the chronically ill diabetic or hypertensive. It's the foundation of our Women, Infant, Child (WIC) Nutritional Program. And it works! Our chronically ill patients are now hospitalized less; and for every \$1 spent on WIC, we save \$3. Persistence, gentle persuasion, faith...*we work in silence.*

As our population grows, so does our need to **protect from environmental risks**. Even though the demands for restaurant inspections are growing, we continue free from food-borne outbreaks. Could it be our reputation for demanding a high standard for compliance on restaurant inspections? Septic system applications continue to be more complex and demanding on Environmental Health staff as technology continues to advance allowing options for residential development to boom in areas where public sewer and water are not economically feasible. As development proceeds in more ecologically sensitive areas, staff must ever be vigilant in assuring that the installation, operation, and maintenance of systems is done in a manner that protects our ground water and prevents water borne outbreaks.

More people mean more individuals sustain animal bites. And, yes, there are rabid animals right here in our neighborhoods. We investigate 250-350 animal bites a year and work with animal control, private physicians and the individuals to either quarantine the animal, test the animal or recommend rabies prophylaxis. Behind the scenes, constant vigilance...*we work in silence*.

In addition to these "natural" threats to health, there are **man-made threats** in this post 9-11 world. We actively plan and prepare to respond to acts of bioterrorism, that we hope never happen, by stockpiling medication, training for mass distribution of antibiotics and immunization, and by developing a robust Medical Reserve Corps of volunteers to assist in emergencies and enhance public health in Western Tidewater. We immunized large numbers of people during the threat of H1N1 flu and are prepared to immunize the public as needed.

The dental program in Western Tidewater is instrumental in the three P's of Public Health: Preventing disease, promoting healthy behaviors, and protecting people from environmental risks. Through our dental screenings which are held in Southampton and Isle of Wight County, we help identify children who are in need of care so their treatment can be less extensive and less expensive if treated early. National statistics also show that every dollar spent on a school based sealant program results in a \$38.00 savings at the dental office. Health department personnel support the monitoring of fluoride levels in community water supplies helping to insure that all citizens receive optimal levels of fluoride. Statistically we know that every \$1.00 spent on fluoridation results in an \$18.00 savings at the dentist.

Last year, our Vital Records staff provided 7,204 copies of death certificates to Funeral Directors and family members... *we work in silence*.

These are your benefits. There are no pre-existing condition clauses, no pre-selection, not even an eligibility criteria. Simply by being a citizen of our fine community, you are automatically on the public health plan. Our premiums are low, but the services are extensive. *And all this...we do in silence!*